

To: Rockville Mayor and Council
From: Sharyn R. Duffin
December 14, 2009
Re: Evaluation of the Bessie Hill house

Exhibit # 1 Attach F
RECEIVED
CITY CLERKS OFFICE
Subject: MAP 2010-00108
2009 DEC 10 PM 3:11
Public Hearing Date: 2/8/10

My grandfather, Vernon Hill, Jr., and his siblings were raised in this house. I have no sentimental attachment to it. However, I do have an interest in preserving Bessie Hill's house as an example of a kinship community.

Ann Willson, a "free woman of color," purchased one acre of land on the Great Falls Road in 1845, some fifteen years before the Civil War. No doubt she witnessed J.E.B. Stuart and his troops ride into Rockville in 1863. We can only imagine her fears: Would her land be confiscated? Would her provisions be looted and animals seized? Would she be enslaved? Who would protect her and her family? Fortunately they survived unscathed.

Ann's granddaughter Eliza married William Johnson in 1866. Ann transferred land to them in 1871 and lived long enough to see several of her great-grandchildren born.

In 1902, Eliza and William Johnson followed tradition and transferred property to their daughter Bessie Hill, who raised her three children here. Bessie was a laundress and served as the organist at Jerusalem Methodist Church. Her husband Vernon was a gardener.

Bessie's house sheltered yet another generation before it was sold in 1945. The balance of her land was sold in about 1972. The last of Ann Willson's original purchase passed out of family ownership in 1977.

I believe a vacant lot of less than one/fifth of an acre would have less appeal than that same lot with a historic house. There are tax incentives, low interest loans, grants and subsidies to assist with restoration. The middle school is across the street; access to 270 is nearby as is Town Center.

This enclave is significant because it was settled by a free black woman before the Civil War. We have here an example of a family that, through its industry and initiative, acquired wealth and was able to pass it to several generations. The Bessie Hill house is the oldest extant original structure of this kinship community; and I would like to see it survive.

Sharyn R. Duffin
710 Douglass Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Exhibit # 2

Attach F

Subject: MAP2010-00108

December 13, 2009

Public Hearing Date: 2/8/10

210 Elizabeth Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850-1207

Mayor and Council
City of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mayor and Council:

I am writing to express my support for authorization to file a sectional map amendment to change zoning from R-90 to R-90 (HD) for 602 Great Falls Road,

I support this authorization for several reasons. This house, also known as the Bessie Hill house, is located in a small African-American community, which was settled in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It is a wonderful example of African-American settlements in Rockville. The construction and architectural qualities of the home are typical for that time period. In addition, the house has significant historical value as a reflection of the heritage and cultural values of African-Americans and their desire to build a sense of community, which is clearly identifiable by the homes built on Great Falls Road, in Rockville.

The home was placed on the Maryland Historical Trust inventory in 1987, and it is appropriate for the city to continue to safeguard and preserve this historic home. I urge the Mayor and Council to protect this home, at 602 Great Falls Road, by approving authorization of the sectional map amendment.

Sincerely,

Lucinda Hall

Lucinda Hall

Exhibit # 3Subject: MAP2010-00108Public Hearing Date: 2/8/10HISTORIC PRESERVATION LTD
FOUNDED 1974

December 10, 2009

The Mayor and Council of Rockville
Rockville City Hall
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Routed To:

☒ Council
☐ City Clerk
☒ City Manager

☐ City Attorney
☐ Council Support Specialist
☒ Other Susan Sw
Robin Zick

2009 DEC 11 AM 11:52

RECEIVED
CITY CLERKS OFFICE

Re: 602 Great Falls Road

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Council:

Peerless Rockville is pleased to endorse the nomination of 602 Great Falls Road as a Historic District.

602 Great Falls Road meets Criterion I-C, I-D, and II-A. This house symbolizes how a free single black woman, Anne Willson, was able to purchase land in a time when slavery existed. With this original one-acre land, Willson provided her family and descendants a place to live and start a family. And the family did until 1977—a long and rich history that all Rockvillians can appreciate.

The house at 602 Great Falls Road is also significant in itself. Although common when built, it is rare today to find a vernacular frame home of this kind in Rockville. Moreover, as the oldest house remaining in this black community, it is important more than ever to save it. This place matters.

Peerless Rockville urges the Mayor and Council to authorize filing of the Sectional Map Amendment at 602 Great Falls Road. We need to protect this site so we can continue to tell the many stories of this family and the African American community.

Sincerely,

Joan Zenzen
President

Exhibit # 4

Subject: MAP2010-00108

Public Hearing Date: 2/8/10

RECEIVED
CITY CLERKS OFFICE
February 5, 2010
2010 FEB -8 PM 5:31

Attach F

To: Rockville Mayor and Council

Re: Map Amendment MAP2010-00108, for a change in zoning from R-90 to R-90 (HD), In order to create a historic district at 602 Great Falls Road.

Dear Mm. Mayor and Council Members,

I support the rezoning of 602 Great Falls Road, known as the Bessie Hill house, to R-90 (HD).

Bessie Hill was my great- grandmother. The property is part of a small kinship community established when her great-great-grandmother,, Ann Willson a "free woman of color", purchased one acre of land in 1845, some fifteen years before the Civil War. It evolved into a generational family enclave that lasted until 1977. The significance of this property can only be understood within the context of this kinship community

The subject property is the oldest extant original structure of this enclave. It is a typical vernacular house characteristic of working-class residents of Rockville at the turn of the 20th century and helps to present a more complete and accurate picture of the history and development of the city. Its demolition would constitute the loss of a valuable resource.

Rezoning the property to R- 90 (HD) would improve its marketability; protect the character of the community; and preserve a piece of Rockville's heritage.

The owner is exploring the possibility of demolishing the house because he believes that it would not be cost effective to renovate it. Surely this house, even with the work required, would appeal to a new owner who appreciates its history and its location. There are tax incentives, low interest loans, grants and subsidies on both the state and local level designed to encourage restoration and preservation of historic structures.

We run the risk of a vacant lot attracting speculators, with no interest in maintaining the character of the settlement. There is nothing to prevent building of a structure incompatible with the modest housing in the

-2-

community. Retaining and restoring the Bessie Hill house would also help to protect the other two ancestral houses on Ann Wilson's land.

The Historic District Commission voted in November 2009 to designate 602 Great Falls road as historic based on an assessment of its history and architecture. It was found that this property met the Criteria 1C, 1D, and IIA for historic Designation. For more than twenty years this kinship community has been recognized as a resource. It was included in the Historic Resources Management Plan in 1986; in the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) inventory in 1987; and in the 1989 Rockville Historic Building Catalog. The time has come to give the Bessie Hill house the protection it deserves.

Sincerely,
Sharyn R. Duffin
710 Douglass Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850-1205
301.762.2422

Planning Commission actions 1/27

Jim Wasilak o Planning, DRC, Sheila Hadley

Exhibit # 5

Attach F

Subject: MAP108 01/27/2010 10:14 PM

Public Hearing Date: 2/8/10

I. RECOMMENDATION TO BOARD OF APPEALS

A. Special Exception SPX2010-00382, Eugene Melanson – for an accessory apartment in the R-90 Zone at 825 Duke Street. *Recommended approval by a vote of 6-0 (Commissioner Wiener absent), with the finding that the application is in agreement with the Master Plan.*

II. RECOMMENDATION TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL

A. Map Amendment MAP2010-00108, Mayor and Council of Rockville – for a change in zoning from R-90 to R-90 (HD) in order to create a historic district at 602 Great Falls Road. *Recommended approval by a vote of 6-0 (Commissioner Wiener absent, with the finding that the application is in agreement with the Master Plan.*

III. WORKSESSION

A. Draft Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan – to continue discussion on the Plan, and to develop a recommendation to the Mayor and Council. *Further discussed recommendations, with final vote to take place on Feb. 10.*

R. James Wasilak, AICP
Chief of Planning
Department of Community Planning and Development Services
City of Rockville, Maryland
240-314-8211 (direct)
240-314-8210 (fax)
240-314-8200 (CPDS main)
www.rockvillemd.gov

MONTGOMERY PRESERVATION

Post Office Box 4661
Rockville, MD 20849-4661

Attach F

Web: www.montgomerypreservation.org
Email: mpi@montgomerypreservation.org

To Promote the Preservation, Protection and Enjoyment of Montgomery County's Rich Architectural Heritage and Historic Landscapes

Exhibit # 6

Subject: MAP1048

Public Hearing Date: 2/8/10

February 8, 2010

The Mayor and Council of Rockville
City of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Agenda 2/8/10, Item 12 – 602 Great Falls Road Zoning Change to R-90HD
For the Public Hearing Record

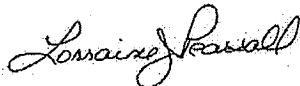
Dear Mayor Marcuccio and Councilmembers:

Montgomery Preservation, Inc. is Montgomery County's nonprofit historic preservation organization. We are writing you today in strong support of the change in zoning for 602 Great Falls Road from R-90 to R-90HD. This resource is extremely important to the history of Rockville and should be protected.

This house is a rare example of small-scale vernacular housing associated with Rockville's African-American kinship community in the Great Falls Road area. It is also remarkable in that it reflects the continuity of six generations of one African-American family in this location, with the roots to this land going back to a free black woman, Ann Wilson, as early as 1845. The house tells an important story that should be preserved for future generations. Culturally and historically, this resource is extremely important to Montgomery County as well as the City of Rockville.

Thank you very much for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Lorraine J. Pearsall,
President

cc: Robin Ziek, Preservation Planner, City of Rockville
Mary van Balgooy, Executive Director, Peerless Rockville
Sharyn Duffin